

**City of Lake Forest Park
Planning Commission
Regular Meeting Summary
17425 Ballinger Way NE—EOC Room
December 13, 2011**

Commissioners present: Chair Richard Saunders, Vice Chair George Piano, Mark Phillips, Chuck Paulsen, John Resha, Chuff Barden, Sean Bouffiou, Dixie Coggins

Commissioners absent: Doug Gochanour

Staff and others present: Steve Bennett, Planning Director; Jennifer Franich, Assistant Planner; Catherine Stanford, City Council Liaison; John Owen, Rachel Miller, and Greg Easton, Consultants; Scott Gochanour, Economic Development Commission; Judy Altman, Community Services Commission co-chair; David Bilski, Transportation Commission; Charlie Heffernan, Civil Services Commission; and Ray Holmdahl, resident.

Call to order: Chair Saunders called the meeting to order at 7:02 pm.

Approval of meeting minutes:

The Planning Commission reviewed the draft minutes from the November 15, 2011 regular meeting. It was noted that there was one typographical error. Cmr. Phillips moved to adopt the minutes as revised. The motion was seconded by Cmr. Piano and approved unanimously.

Public Comment:

Vice Chair Piano congratulated Councilmember Stanford and the group for gaining funding for Phase II of the subarea project.

Old Business:

Southern Gateway Project Update: Review results of November Open House

Chair Saunders reviewed the November open house. Commissioners counted 101 attendees and 75 signed in. He said that there were some concerns expressed about the project in regard to the process, funding, traffic, and new development. However, there was a good discussion and dialogue.

Rachel Miller, consultant, reviewed the results of the 2nd Open House. She stated that there was general support for the design among attendees. There was some concern over seven-story height limit. Some wanted a larger buffer. There was not much support for trail access in LFP, in part due to potential problems with parking, crime, and safety. Many voiced opinions that they want a defined gateway at 145th Street, including trees, greenery, and streetlights with aesthetic improvements. There were requests for undergrounding utilities, and overall strong support for a pedestrian path.

Chair Saunders added that a lot of discussion came about regarding traffic and how to prevent making traffic worse. John Owen said that this will be addressed in the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

Cmr. Paulsen said that the cost of doing nothing is still a cost and each year it is exacerbated. John Owen presented the Elks property option comparison. A “big box” store wouldn’t perform as well for the developer, city, or owner. Minimum density as a condition will ensure that the site is mixed use. He asked Commissioners if there should be a residential component requirement in this area. That would prevent a large grocer, for example. Vice Chair Piano said that mixed use would be best for tax base, and is good for creating a neighborhood place. Cmr. Phillips asked if there were more options for buffering, and also about traffic and congestion. John Owen said that with mixed use, traffic is spread out over the day. There is not one destination for all, so mixed use would have less traffic impact.

Vice Chair Piano suggested modulation for taller buildings. John Owen offered that vegetation is the best for buffering, like a mature tree. Mitigation for the impacts like this will be part of EIS. For a 5 over 1 building, the height limit is generally 75 feet. A 20 feet buffer for trees allows you to stagger them and provides more of a screen. In the next public meeting, we will try to address height, setbacks, and traffic and go forward with the mixed use idea. To extend the new “main” street, parking space could potentially be used. The City may be able to use eminent domain for building a road. Cmr. Resha said that the idea of imminent domain should be the last resort. There are incentives we could offer to the developer for developing that roadway.

Cmr. Resha stated that he is not ready to give up on the idea of trail access. Trail access could be a good feature for the residents in that area. Chair Saunders brought up ideas for a path rather than a “formal” sidewalk, or the use of pervious materials. Councilmember Stanford said that one goal is to bring revenue back to the city, but access could (if done well) also increase property values to the whole area.

Cmr. Paulsen said that he would like to increase north-south connectivity perhaps over the ravine with a pedestrian path that is not so close to car traffic. Commissioners discussed this idea and will aim at making the intersection at 153rd and Bothell Way pedestrian-friendly.

Councilmember Stanford said that the city was awarded \$500,000 in state funding to look at options for and construct a park and ride lot. The money was not used but has been extended into 2012. Cmr. Paulsen said that a “pocket” park and ride that connects different modes of transportation might work for this area. Cmr. Resha suggested a “Kiss and Ride” for people to drop off or pick up someone riding the bus (usually their spouse).

John Owen observed that a lot of the discussion is focused less on actions and more on policy. A policy-based statement is a good way to frame the report. The discussion provides us with a better way of stating the framework for the subarea. Cmr. Piano said that residents need an idea of the design we are considering, but all along “Step” 1 seemed to be meant to provide policy direction.

New Business:

There was no new business.

Reports/Communications/Announcements:

The next Planning Commission meeting is scheduled for January 10, 2012.

Vice Chair Piano asked the commission if they would like to fill a table at the Friends of the Community Breakfast. He also described the Short Course on Planning to the commission. He said it was very helpful and provided a basis for understanding what the commission was supposed to be doing.

Adjournment: 8:53 PM

APPROVED:

Richard Saunders, Chair